



## A Word about Ethics APPEARANCES OF BIAS



### **When does a personal relationship create a conflict with my Government duties?**

- Whenever you are assigned to a task focused on a particular person or organization with which you have a close business or personal relationship, it creates a conflict because members of the public may question your impartiality.

### **Do all close relationships create a possible conflict of interest or appearance of a conflict?**

- No; ethics regulations cover only some personal and business relationships; you have such a “covered relationship” with:
  - anyone with whom you have (or are seeking) a business or financial relationship;
  - someone who employed you or was your client during the last year, or two years prior to your appointment if you are a political appointee;
  - a close relative;
  - a member of your household;
  - a current or prospective employer or client of your parents, dependent children, or spouse; and
  - an organization in which you are an active participant.

### **Are any other factors considered in determining whether a personal relationship creates a conflict?**

- Yes; a conflict of interest involving a personal relationship is present only when your participation would likely be perceived by the public as affecting your impartiality.

### **How are conflicts based on personal relationships resolved?**

- You must either:
  - not work on a matter in which an appearance of bias is likely because of a personal relationship or
  - obtain special authorization to work on the matter, which may be granted if the agency’s need for your participation outweighs concern about an appearance of bias you or your supervisor can seek such an authorization through the Ethics Law and Programs Division.

### **What if an appearance of bias is not from a “covered relationship?”**

- You should discuss with your supervisor whether a matter should be reassigned if someone with whom you have a personal relationship, such as a friend, is involved. The decision on whether to reassign the matter would be based on management concerns, rather than ethics regulations.